



GROUND COVER

NEWS AND SOLUTIONS FROM THE GROUND UP

OCTOBER 2012 VOLUME 3 ISSUE 10

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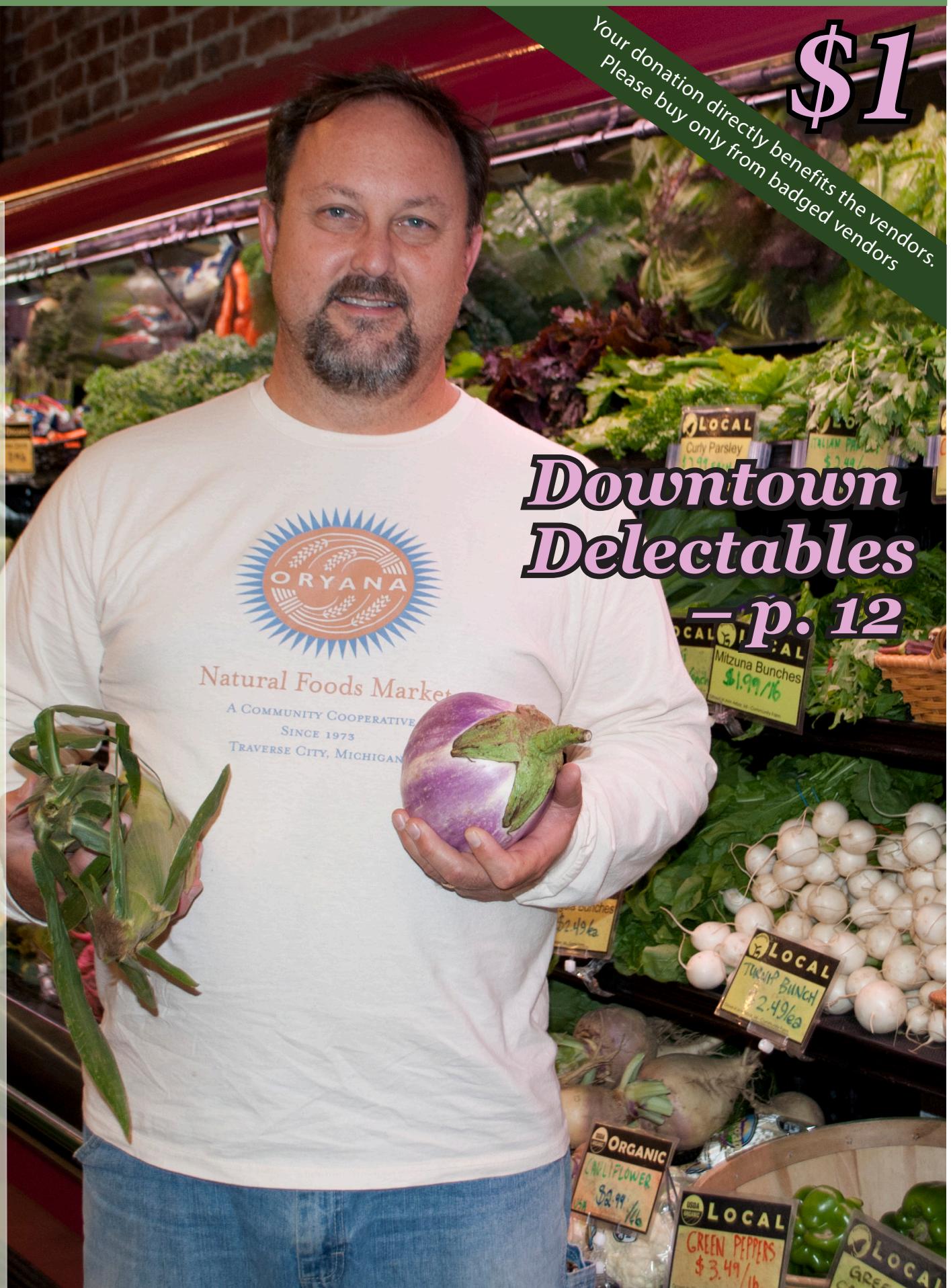
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Facing a crisis? Do something!



by Susan Beckett
Publisher

This is the gist of a sermon I recently heard in New Jersey.

That red tights-wearing caped crusader, Superman, came into being along with most of the rest of the superheroes, during the Great Depression. Surrounded by suffering and hopelessness, people who reached for hope rather than wallowing in despair yearned for someone to fly to their rescue.

While fantasies help us cope, it is the actions of mere mortals that turn the tide. According to the rabbinic commentary, when the Jews reached

the shores of the Red Sea on their flight from Egypt, Moses prayed, raised his staff and called out to God to part the sea but nothing happened. Only when Nachson strode into the sea and the water reached his chest did the miracle occur. One subtext of the story is: when faced with a crisis, don't just stand there, do something.

Our country and many of us individually still face an economic crisis. What can we do? One thing we can do is be good citizens. We can help our neighbors, act responsibly and take an active role in guiding our government at all levels.

The election four years ago recorded the highest voter turnout in four decades but it was still less than 60%. Voter suppression measures have passed in many states and we have only our governor standing between us and a legislature that wants more restrictive

measures in Michigan. Voting is a privilege and responsibility for which people around the world are still giving their lives – so vote!

Take the time to study all the issues and where candidates stand on them. Research the many ballot proposals facing us this year. They will determine the future of collective bargaining in Michigan, the ability of the legislature to impose taxes, energy sources and costs, the cost and remuneration for home health care, and of course, the obstacles to constructing more bridges to Canada. Sidestep the demagoguery and explore all sides of the issues.

It is often said that in a democracy, people get the government they deserve. This year, let's each do our part to rescue ourselves with exceptional leadership guided by an informed constituency.

Good sources of information include:

Project Vote Smart (votesmart.org) – candidate, issue and ballot proposal background by locale, and voter registration links.

The League of Women Voters (vote411.org) – voter registration and polling information and sample ballots.

I Side With... (isidewith.com) – take a quiz to see which candidate you side on most issues with.

The voter registration deadline is Tuesday, October 9, so don't delay if you are not already registered. You can register online through vote411.org or in person at a Secretary of State office. Every citizen is eligible to vote, regardless of their housing situation. Let's reclaim our democracy!

GROUNDCOVER MISSION:

Groundcover News exists to create opportunity and a voice for low-income people while taking action to end homelessness and poverty.

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Reader asks, “Can we trust Romney?”

by Veronica Sanitate
Groundcover Contributor

Mitt and Ann Romney were interviewed in *Parade* magazine on August 25, 2012. They appear to be a sincere couple. But something is missing. It's the ability to directly answer certain questions. This may be at the heart of why many are uncomfortable with Mitt.

PARADE: *Governor, your campaign speeches talk about the middle class, but the vast majority of the questions we received from readers asked about your ability to relate to their struggles. In essence, how do you know what it's like to be someone without means, someone, as one reader puts it, “trying to scrape by, living on food stamps”?*

MITT ROMNEY: *Each of us faces struggles of one kind or another.*

Letter to the Editor

Sadly the high level of angry political arguments persists because it seems to work. But in 1932 Old Money Herbert Hoover and his GOP allies were driven out of power by poor people and others who wanted better lives. Poor people have just as much right to decent lives as any other Americans! Are YOU mad enough to VOTE? What favors has the GOP done for you lately? Even six more Democrats in the House would greatly tip the balance and twelve would become a veto-proof majority. The same power that created the New Deal is now in your hands. Don't let it slip away. VOTE!

-Paul Lambert

Our life was not characterized by financial stress as much as it was by health issues. I served as a pastor of a congregation and saw people with various challenges and did my best to help them. I believe my experience in the private sector, the voluntary sector, and government has helped teach me what it takes to help people with different types of challenges.

Note that Romney switches the topic to health rather than deal with the “financial stress” issues. It's not likely he knows what it is like “to scrape by, living on food stamps.”

Later in the interview, his wife Ann talks about sacrifice, in relation to tithing in the Mormon Church.

PARADE: *Let's talk for a moment about your faith. How has tithing [the Mormon practice of giving*

10 percent of one's income to the Church] shaped your view of how we treat each other?

AR: *I love tithing. When Mitt and I give that check, I actually cry.*

MR: *So do I, but for a different reason.*

AR: *I know this money is an indication of how much we trust God and love the principle of sacrifice. And it teaches us not to be too, too tied to the things of the world. And it is a very good reminder of how blessed we really are, and most of those blessings do not come from a financial source, but from the power above.*

Ann is lovely in this discussion of sacrifice and faith. But somehow,

see ROMNEY, page 5



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A dose of amazement



by Rev. Dr.
Martha Brunell
Pastor, Bethlehem
United Church of
Christ

As I sorted through possibilities for my monthly column, I kept coming back to this well-known quote from Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel:

*Our goal should be to live life in radical amazement...
get up in the morning and look at the world in a way that takes nothing for granted. Everything is phenomenal; everything is incredible; never treat life casually. To be spiritual is to be amazed.*

These are words that resonate for people from a variety of spiritual and wisdom traditions and for those who claim no particular tradition. The Heschel phrase "radical amazement"

brings to my awareness an experience from more than a decade ago.

A clergy colleague of mine, Ellen, lives in Saint Louis where I lived and worked for many years. We have known one another since we were young clergymen in the late 1970s. Our friendship has ebbed and flowed with different rhythms over the years. At one point in time, we used to meet early on Wednesday mornings to walk at the Missouri Botanical Garden. The Garden opens extra early on Wednesday mornings to accommodate walkers en route to work. Our Wednesday morning walking ritual was interrupted for months after Ellen injured her leg and needed a long season for recovery and physical therapy. We returned to the Garden on Wednesday in the opening week of November. It happened to be the morning after the first hard frost. Cold temperatures arrived late that year.

We made our way through the entry, beside the reflecting pools now empty of water lilies, by the Climatron, and

into the Japanese Garden. On the far side of the Japanese Garden, at the approach to the Woodland Garden, there is a beautiful old stand of ginkgo trees lining either side of a wide paved pathway. I always think of that section of the Garden as the Avenue of the Ginkgoes. The ginkgo is an ancient tree dating back to the dinosaurs. It has a simple, broad, fan-shaped leaf. Often a ginkgo tree will drop all its leaves at the same time very close to the first frost. That morning as we passed beneath those mighty trees, they all started letting go of their frost-weighted leaves simultaneously. Leaves were clinking to the ground on all sides while the rising sun sparkled off their frosty edges. It was a moment dancing with a sense of miracle. Walkers paused and were pelted with leaves. An older garden employee stopped his golf cart and enjoyed the moment. A younger garden employee moving quickly on foot rushed through the scene. As his younger colleague hurried on his way, the older man shook his head and smiled. How could one miss such an occasion of radical amazement!

Shortly after I made the decision about my column content yesterday afternoon, my phone rang. It was Ellen. We talk very irregularly now. The last time we were on the phone was well over a year ago. After our greetings, I simply said, "Guess what, I am just about to write about the ginkgoes for Groundcover News." It wasn't a showy display as it was a decade earlier, but this ginkgo moment, a moment of synchronicity, had its own radical amazement. I was filled with ginkgo remembrance in Ann Arbor, and the friend who also was present at the original ginkgo moment called while she waited in the Baltimore airport for a flight home to her family in St. Louis. Radical amazement comes in many guises.

You will read this in the early days of fall. May this new season have frequent doses of radical amazement for all of us. Slow down and be careful not to miss them.

Dedication to a Great Man and Husband, Mr. Wolfgang Ruhland by Grace Ruhland

Wolfie Bear, all through the years we've been together, through ups and downs, your love has always been strong. You've stood in my corner no matter what's going on. Strong love can move mountains, and I know that this pertains to us.

You appreciate and cherish me, the many things we share, and it shows by and in the many things you do with such tender love and caring. You are fantastic with our grandchildren and you brighten up their lives, too.

I'm so fortunate to have your love. It helped me to get through those long days when I had to be away. Even though we were apart, we weren't really far from each other. You live in my heart; we're meant to be together.

As we grow older and closer, I want to tell you each day that comes how much you mean to me and that I will love you forever! Your support during this past year-and-a-half has shown me even more that you deeply love me.

I look forward to and enjoy spending time with you: quiet walks on the beach, laying in the sand watching the waves hit the shore, cooking excellent meals together, reading, and especially our hugs!

If I could present you with an award, it would be "Best Husband in the World"!

*Your Loving Wife,
"Gracie"*



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The Invisible City

by Leah Hess
Groundcover Contributor

Leah Hess is a sophomore at Skyline High School.

This summer, I went on my fourth youth mission trip. For the first time in those four years, our church, Westminster Presbyterian, did something totally different. We stayed here, in Ann Arbor, and did work in and around our own city. It's a great idea: if there's need close to home, why go somewhere else to serve?

This trip was called The Invisible City.

Each day from Monday to Wednesday, groups of three or four youths and one adult went to a few venues, sometimes by car, but more often by public buses and bikes. We helped grow food, bag food, make food, serve food, do yard work, help kids learn, talk with older people, or just learn about the organizations around us.

I definitely learned more that week than I did on any of the other mission trips I'd been on. But we didn't just become more informed about each organization and the people they help.

We learned how to use the city buses and how to get around town on only a bike.

We learned how difficult it is for eight people to buy a meal when each person only has one dollar.

We learned what it's like to have to shower at the YMCA.

We learned never to use the word "handicapped" to describe a person who has a disability.

We gained deeper understanding of the situations going on in the Invisible City.

"Invisible" makes a lot of sense. Even though I'd heard their names before, I didn't know much about most of the places where we served. I hadn't even heard of some of them. Until that week in June, they were just buildings I'd passed by without ever really seeing.

Like St. Andrew's Episcopal Church, which I'd definitely seen before. It's in the middle of downtown Ann



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Arbor, but I didn't notice it until we went inside and served breakfast for people in our community who needed food.

And the Ann Arbor Center for Independent Living. I had no idea it was a place that helps people with disabilities.

I didn't know Dawn Farms was a place where people addicted to drugs or alcohol recover, while farming.

Parkridge Community Center in Ypsilanti, where we helped teach first-through fifth-grade kids math and writing skills.

SOS Community Services. Avalon Housing and Edible Avalon. Neighborhood Senior Services. Glacier Hills. The Delonis Center... They were just names I'd hear. Now they're places, they're people, they're stories. They've become visible.

At the end of the week, our group had a conversation during our daily devotions time about what else became

visible during the week. Some of the things that came up on the list, besides the organizations we served, were the people of Camp Take Notice, with whom we had dinner on Tuesday evening; bus drivers; Groundcover News. We also made a list of things that became invisible. Like stereotypes or the sense of "us" and "them."

I'll leave you with Matthew 13:15-1, from *The Message*:

Your ears are open but you don't hear a thing.

Your eyes are awake but you don't see a thing.

The people are blockheads! They stick their fingers in their ears

so they won't have to listen; They screw their eyes shut

so they won't have to look, so they won't have to deal with me

face-to-face and let me heal them.

But you have God-blessed eyes – eyes that see! And God-blessed ears – ears that hear!

A lot of people, prophets and humble believers among them,

would have given anything to see what you are seeing, to hear what you are hearing, but never had the chance.

During the Invisible City mission trip, we got the chance. Our eyes saw and our ears heard. I hope you'll take the chance and see the Invisible City, too.

The Invisible City Summer 2013: June 23-June 29. Join us! Call Youth Director, Leslie Picken, for more information: (734) 761-9320.

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Miriam takes on Social Security

by Susan Beckett

(What follows is but a snippet from the adventures of Groundcover vendor Miriam's life, which she hopes will one day be recorded in a book. Any author interested in working with Miriam should contact Groundcover.)

Miriam wanted this article published because, "I want people to know how the system fabricates and handles situations that they don't want to deal with. For seven years, I told them and explained my situation but they demanded proof. Now that I got the proof, they are procrastinating and wasting time, hoping I'll die."

Miriam has been suing the Social Security Administration for payments from her father's social security following his death, as she was his only disabled child. She was known to the system since she had applied for Social Security disability at the age of 22, four years after she escaped from Caro State Hospital. The courts have already ruled in her favor on four out of the five steps to proving her claim and the remaining step hinges on proving that she was still disabled during the four years when she was on the run, fearing a return to the hospitals that had kept her prisoner for the previous decade.



Despite challenges, Miriam fights for what she feels due.

Miriam's odyssey began long ago when she suffered a series of grand mal seizures at the age of seven. They left her unconscious and hospitalized with little chance for recovery. Though she did awaken after several days, her brain, already beset with epilepsy, had suffered further damage that affected her ability to control her emotions.

After several run-ins at school, she was taken from the third grade and sent to Pontiac State Mental Hospital where she received no further education and was diagnosed as "incorrigible." Miriam

had health insurance through her father's company and she believes the hospital kept her, in large part, because of the payments it was receiving. Among the bizarre and damaging experiences she had was being prescribed cigarettes at the age of 12 while she was a patient at Pontiac.

She attempted escape at Pontiac, and from Ionia (to which she was transferred at age 12, while it was a hospital for the criminally insane), and finally successfully fled from Caro. Miriam lived on the streets and survived the best she could with no identity papers and only a third-grade education, on top of a gripping fear that she would be caught and returned to yet another institution. She was in contact with her mother who arranged for a family friend, Mr. Harris, to bring her Dilantin, the drug she depended on for suppressing her epilepsy attacks.

The Social Security Administration claimed that during those four years she had healed and was therefore not a continuously disabled child entitled to survivor benefits. Miriam persisted until she found a good lawyer to take on her case. When he first filed in December of 2011, he was told it would take six to 18 months to get a hearing. Meanwhile, Miriam tracked down Mr.

Harris, who swore in an affidavit that he had continuously provided her with Dilantin during that time. She further procured testimony from a renowned doctor from the University of Michigan that the kind of damage evident in her brain could not have gone away. When these documents were recently presented to the court, they were told that there were still 18 months worth of cases ahead of Miriam's.

In Miriam's initial attempt to rectify the situation seven years ago, she represented herself before a judge in Texas with whom she communicated over a flat-screen television. He told her he was setting her case aside and that when it was recalled, he wanted her to have a lawyer, because she had a good case and stood to recover 40 years of back pay.

"Most people would give up on something like this," said Miriam. "What they don't realize is that I have nothing to lose. They never thought I'd keep playing with these papers."

"Do the right thing," Miriam urges the Social Security Administration. "If the shoe were on the other foot, you'd force me to do the right thing. Now, you do the right thing."

Blind trust: can Mitt Romney answer the question?

continued from page 2

it rings hollow. If their reported income was 22 million (I don't think this includes the money sheltered in the Grand Cayman Islands), and they reported that they "tithed" 3 million, then, the "sacrifice" was that they lived on only \$19 million in 2010 – the only year they reported their income.

And what does it mean that the "blessings" don't come from a financial source? This seems like a denial of the reality we live in. If you don't have financial well-being, the other blessings, say, good health, or the ability to cope with and manage diseases (e.g., Ann's multiple sclerosis) are not likely to be available. Is Ann saying that the "power above" made them rich? So, it wasn't Mitt's business acumen? Whatever the "blessings," the implication is that the Romneys are tight with the "power above" – whereas the rest of us, the 99 percent, whether church-goers or not, must not be. If the "power above" makes us rich or poor, where does this leave the American Dream?

PARADE: There were a number of questions about your financial wealth. New Jersey resident Harry

H. asked if you would make this pledge: If elected, do you promise to bank in the United States?

MR: My investments have been managed for almost the last 10 years by a blind trust. A trustee decides where to put our money. If I'm president, my understanding is the same principle applies, that I may not direct any of my investments. I can't tell you what my investments might be because I won't make them.

So, the answer about banking in the United States? Probably not. But here's an interesting side-note. When Romney ran for Senate against Ted Kennedy in 1994, he attacked Kennedy for his use of a blind trust, saying, "The blind trust is an age-old ruse."

Todd Purdum discusses this in *Vanity Fair*, July 12, 2012:

Never mind that Mitt Romney has an estimated net worth as high as \$250 million, or that some of it has been invested in offshore accounts of a sort never held by any previous presidential contender. He assures us that his assets are held in a "blind trust" over which he exerts no control.

But just how blind are such trusts, anyway? In Romney's case, apparently not quite blinkered enough to keep his trustee – who is also his personal lawyer and longtime friend Bradford Malt – from investing more than \$10 million of Romney's money in an investment fund managed by Romney's son, Tagg.

So, what's a rich guy to do? Purdum goes on to report that since Lyndon Johnson, presidents have been sensitive to "conflicts of interest," but it wasn't until 1978 that blind trusts became formal options for executive branch officers.

As a freshman senator, Barack Obama – whose wealth comes almost entirely from his book royalties – set up a blind trust but later that same year sold all of his stocks and

closed the trust because he decided that even such an arrangement could not protect him from the appearance of a conflict. Most of his wealth is now invested in U.S. Treasury bonds and diversified funds – about the most transparent option available.

Purdum also says the "blind trust" has another meaning thanks to Garry Trudeau, who, in his *Doonesbury* comic strip in 1984, accused Vice President George H.W. Bush of depositing his manhood into one.

There's yet another meaning. It has to do with the difficulty of asking people to blindly trust in someone who hasn't given plausible reasons or sufficient answers.



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Homelessness and Poetry

by Orian Zakai
Groundcover Contributor

“People don’t even realize the poems they have inside them!”

These are the words of Mary Conway, a poet and a community organizer who initiated Word Threads, a poetry writing group that meets every Friday at the Delonis Center as part of the Imagine Activity Center program (imaginewarmingcenters.org).

I met with Mary at the People’s Food Co-op on a Monday afternoon and we spent a fascinating couple of hours discussing homelessness and creativity. Mary has lived in Ann Arbor since 1991, when she was a student of English and History at the University of Michigan. In November 2011, financial difficulties drove her to homelessness and she entered to Delonis Center as a resident.

“Poetry is a new experience I encountered when I became homeless,” she said.

Her insights about the experience of homelessness are illuminating and poignant.

“Homelessness is a great shock. You are the same person but you have to adjust your thinking. You have to understand where you are in order to get out. Homelessness is isolation. You’re cut off from family. Moral support comes from a few friends who understand. I was looking for someone to talk to and found Sister Gray in St. Andrew’s Church, where breakfast is served every day for all who need it. I told Sister Gray that I wanted to talk about homelessness, and she immediately introduced me to Courtney and George from the Write After Breakfast program, and asked me if I wanted to explore the issue of homelessness in this context. I jumped at the opportunity.”

The Write After Breakfast program (writeafterbreakfast.tumblr.com) was a dramatic turning point for Mary.

In Courtney and George, Mary recalled, “I found two receptive, warm, and smart people who wanted to listen and guide you in the experience of using words. They never introduced or read any poem to us in order to say ‘this is how you write.’ They would bring a topic or a text to serve as inspiration, and then they left you to yourself to write. The atmosphere they created was very important. We were in the library or in the guest



Orian Zakai (right) and Mary (center) run a poetry workshop for the Imagine group at the Delonis Center.

room of the church. There were books around; shadows of leaves and trees came through the windows. I let go. I could not put the words on the paper fast enough. They were just all there. I felt very creative. Some of the poems were difficult and angry and some were optimistic.”

This is a poem Mary wrote in December 2011:

*Oh the moments of food
remembrance past
Sunday afternoons with Laurie
Colwin's swelling eggs turning*

*Birthday cakes in golden orange
Breakfast nooks.*

*Craig Claiborne's braised short
ribs with mustard and white wine.
An offering of peace to a party
A bribe.... please like me – Love me
Remembrance, past –
And now*

*Hunger and shelter are intermixed.
Starve the fever, feed the old.*

In April 2012, the Write After Breakfast program went on break for the summer. At the same time Mary decided that she wanted to help other people go through the same creative process she went through with the help of Courtney and George.

“I wrote a letter to the Delonis Center urging them to open a creative pathway for the Shelter’s residents. It was such

a source of hope for my soul and I wanted to share it with others,” said Mary.

“You’re there and you’re broken and you’re going through isolation. Who are you now? I wanted to see poems hung on the wall at the shelter. I wanted to see art done there. I never got a response to my letter. But at the same time the Imagine Community group was working on similar idea. And eventually we started conducting creative workshops at the Delonis Center including the Word Threads poetry group.”

Orian Zakai: What is the meaning of the title “Word Threads”?

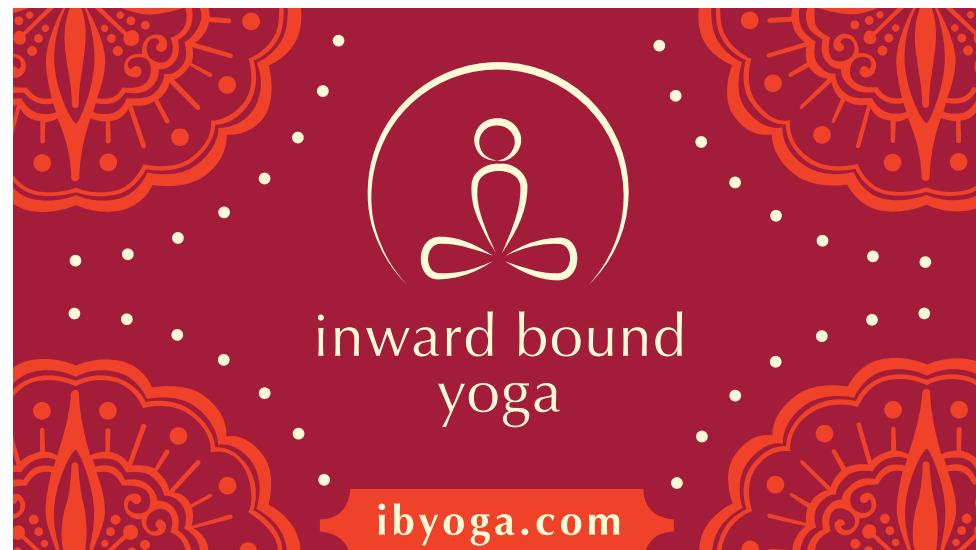
Mary Conway: “It’s like in Dada art when you see loose words floating. I saw words floating. Words are constantly around us and the thread

are the poems, and we were threading these words together making a fabric, something soft and warm that was protective, and I felt that that’s what the poems were doing. They were being shared quietly and they were protective.”

OZ: How was the experience of the Word Threads group in comparison with the Write after Breakfast program?

MC: “It was a more fluid group; people come and go; people who want to write. At the Delonis Center, people don’t even realize the poems they have inside them. Sometimes I let people talk and just write their words down and then I read them back to them and they cannot believe. And then in walk these genius poets. Poets from birth – they have poems memorized in their brains, like this one by Kathy Dixon:”

see IMAGINE, page 7



Imagine brings poetry to Delonis

continued from page 6

The State / K.A. Dixon

On a theater marquee:
NOW PLAYING

- 1) The collapse of capitalism.
- 2) God's Farce.
- 3) Apocalypse whenever: Necrophile's Revenge. Attendance appears to be mandatory. Perhaps you can change which show you are watching.

OZ: How did you design the workshop?

MC: I followed the Write after Breakfast format. We would begin by sitting down and talking informally, getting comfortable. Then I would introduce a prompt. Sometimes I would check out books of arts from the library to inspire people to be creative. At other times the prompts were related to homelessness. This brought on some very poignant writing, such as the following:

Home / Sharoun

*I asked about a poem, the lady to me says write about home.....
HOME is where I want to be,
Not living in a Shelter,
Not living in a house, but, only...
A place where peace, joy and
happiness RAINS,
And, Sweet like a honey comb.*

MC: The Word Threads section on the Imagine website is another opportunity to make homeless people feel proud that their words are published.

Homelessness is anonymous; we don't have names. You see these troops of homeless people walking the streets. The poetry on the site exposes the larger public to the identity and humanity of the homeless.

OZ: What are your personal plans for this year?

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The Conscious Mind

by Shawn Story

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Hint: D = B

Solutions on page 11

Groundcover Vendor Code

While Groundcover News is a nonprofit organization and newspaper vendors are considered contracted self-employers, we still have expectations of how vendors should conduct themselves while selling and representing the paper.

The following list is our Vendor Code of Conduct, which every vendor reads and signs before receiving a badge and papers. We request that if you discover a vendor violating any tenets of the Code, please contact us and provide as many details as possible. Our paper and our vendors should be positively impacting our County.

All vendors must agree to the following code of conduct:

- Groundcover News will be distributed for a voluntary donation of \$1. I agree not to ask for more than a dollar or solicit donations by any other means.
- I will only sell current issues of Groundcover News.
- I agree not to sell additional goods or products when selling the paper or to panhandle, including panhandling with only one paper.
- I will wear and display my badge when selling papers.
- I will only purchase the paper from Groundcover News Staff and will not sell to or buy papers from other Groundcov-

er News vendors, especially vendors who have been suspended or terminated.

- I agree to treat all customers, staff and other vendors respectfully. I will not "hard sell," threaten, harass or pressure customers, staff, or other vendors verbally or physically.
- I will not sell Groundcover News under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
- I understand that I am not a legal employee of Groundcover News but a contracted worker responsible for my own well-being and income.
- I understand that my badge is property of Groundcover News and will not deface it. I will present my badge when purchasing the papers.
- I agree to stay off private property when selling Groundcover News.
- I understand to refrain from selling on public buses, federal property or stores unless there is permission from the owner.
- I agree to stay at least one block away from another vendor. I will also abide by the Vendor corner policy.

If you see any Groundcover News vendors not abiding by the code of conduct, please report the activity to:
contact@groundcovernews.com
734-972-0926

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The Business Side of Youth

by Shoshana Mandel
Groundcover Contributor

The B. Side, also known as The Business Side of Youth, is a program of Eastern Michigan University's Office of Academic Service-Learning that was founded in September 2007 to establish a youth-driven entrepreneurial and leadership culture that provides economic opportunities for Ypsilanti and Washtenaw County youth. It sprang out of a youth mapping project that determined that the highest rate of unemployment in southeastern Michigan existed among youth – averaging 12-14 percent higher than adults. The youth of Washtenaw County recognized that employment opportunities were their number-one priority.

The founders believed in the idea that if you cannot find a job, you must make a job, and they built the program around this concept. To date, over 550 youth have participated in The B. Side's programs, with \$456,000 in grant money awarded over five years, and tens of thousands of dollars generated through contracts and revenues from business products and ideas. Initially, The B. Side was launched through grants from the Ann Arbor Area Community Foundation, RNR Foundation and the James A. and Faith Knight Foundation. Currently, EMU's College of Business provides significant space for running programs and Washtenaw County MiWorks! Youth Programs has provided funding for the past three years through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA).

There are 4 different programs that provide a variety of opportunities targeted for youth age 13-21, but due to demand and need are now serving youth ages 11-25. The **Young Moguls Club** provides experiential learning through continued business plan development, mentoring and internships. The **B. Side of Art** is an 8-week intensive project-based summer program culminating in products such as music CD's, graphic t-shirts, expressive literature, and more. **B. Side Basics** is a 10-week twice-yearly (Fall and Winter) course to learn business plan development with the goal of developing an "entrepreneurial attitude" and a working business plan. The final class consists of a business plan presentation competition for a cash prize. The younger participants learn from being around those older and more experienced, and the older participants learn by teaching and shepherding those younger. They learn to write business plans, to improve their communication skills and develop job readiness skills. The cost is \$50, a small

sum given the extent of the training, and there are partial scholarships available.

Finally, **B. Side Enterprises** are those businesses started and owned by The B. Side and provide hands-on experience and revenue generation to contribute to the sustainability of the program. This includes Concepts of Life, a local youth online magazine, and Digital Inclusion (DI) – the program I am eager to learn more about.

I am interviewing Jack Bidlack, Director since 2008, who talks excitedly about The B. Side, as if just discovering the wonder of it all. I have to ask him to slow down as he rattles off the history and generates a palpable enthusiasm for each and every aspect. He describes "successive planning for success" and that "the success the youth experience through these programs are transferable to life." He discloses his own success and difficulty in his own business. Then he shares more statistics, this time sobering ones: "30 percent of students drop out of local high schools, 30 percent of all college students do not graduate, and 70 percent of community college students read at a remedial level." He does not elaborate. We discuss the similar missions of our programs, and he makes an introduction to several high schools in the area who he says could provide support to Groundcover's mission, making connections for youth not even in his program.

He apologizes for the disarray of the building the program is housed in. There is asbestos remediation going on, no air conditioning, and a maze of rooms piled high with computer parts, including monitors, CPUs, keyboards, and laptops. That is, until the DI program youth repair, renew and resell



A student participant helps prepare a donated, rehabbed computer that will go to a low-income community member.

them at a greatly reduced price. Today we are here to receive two computers, offered to Groundcover News free of charge. Jack says that The B. Side likes to support newer non-profits that do not have the resources to obtain these basic essentials. The computers are replacing our one computer that cannot be salvaged, except as scrap. We are also getting one for our vendors to use for writing contributions for the paper and for personal use. That is

the exact purpose intended for DI: to bridge the "digital divide" with people who are at-risk and from low-income backgrounds. Many of our vendors are homeless, or do not have the finances to afford a computer, and there are a few who do not have the technical knowledge. Either way, they are without an essential tool in our society, and we were without a decent computer for office management and functioning.

The DI prices range from \$100 for a Dell or Mac desktop to \$320 for a Dell or Mac laptop. Some of the other services include data cleaning and wiping, hardware and software installation, trouble-shooting, peer-to-peer training opportunities, and community outreach and engagement. Since the program's launch, it has trained 95 youth and paid 67. More than 305 computers have been refurbished and distributed, generating over \$25,000 in revenue.

Jack provides an introduction to several of the students who are hard at work on various computers. They are professional and courteous, and the atmosphere is relaxed. Jack has spent nearly two hours of his valuable time with me. One of the students collects Groundcover's new computers and the accessories. We walk back to the car. At the last minute he says to wait and returns with a barely used copier/scanner/printer/fax machine with extra ink. He heard this mentioned as another of our needs. The equipment was his own.

For more information on The B. Side, contact Jack Bidlack: jbidlac1@emich.edu, (734) 487-6570. For information on Digital Inclusion, donations, volunteering, refurbished computers and hardware, technical support and training visit: www.direcycle.com, or call (734) 487-8070.

Next spring Groundcover will host a benefit performance of comedian-philosopher Steve Bhaerman, also known as Swami Beyondananda. Leading up to the performance, we will be sharing some of his funny wisdom with you on a monthly basis. If you want it on a daily basis, visit his website and sign up to get a daily laughsite: www.wakeuplaughing.com

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"DRIVE YOUR KARMA, CURB YOUR DOGMA."**

- SWAMI BEYONDANADA

One person can make a difference: a Swedish diplomat saved thousands of Jews

by Martin Stolzenberg
Groundcover Contributor

How one inexperienced, young man persevered to carry out this remarkable life-saving action was a miracle of the human spirit and will power. He should be celebrated forever for his superb courage in the face of overwhelming evil.

Raoul Wallenberg's legacy was the tens of thousands, maybe even 100,000 lives that he saved. It is mind-blowing to try to fully comprehend the magnitude of what he did.

What kind of a man was this?

What drove him to undertake his mission?

How did he muster his courage?

How could he accomplish so much in a few short months?

What happened to Raoul Wallenberg?

Raoul Wallenberg was born in 1912, three months after his father's unexpected death. The Wallenbergs were Swedish, wealthy and accomplished. His family was Lutheran, although a great-grandfather had been Jewish.

In 1931, Raoul sought to enter college in the United States, a tradition in his family. His paternal grandfather, who acted as a surrogate father, urged him to matriculate to the University of Michigan. It had a highly-regarded school of architecture – an area of interest for Raoul – and was a public university that attracted talented students.

Raoul clicked at Michigan. His friends found him to be mature, engaging, funny and good-natured. In bull sessions one classmate described him as, a "star," always thoughtful in his comments.

He wrote home, "I am very impressed by America. The people are natural and good-natured, hospitable and easy to get along with. His sister described him at that time as an "anti-snob," who "loved reading and Charlie Chaplin and the Marx Brothers." He liked American hot dogs and wore sneakers.

Although his family was rich, during school holidays, the adventurous Raoul hitchhiked across the United States, Canada and Mexico. He believed that traveling like a hobo enabled him to contact new people every day. This would give him training in diplomacy and tact.

As graduation neared he was sad to contemplate the end of his college years

at the University of Michigan.

He wrote, "I feel so at home in my little Ann Arbor that I'm beginning to sink down roots here and have a hard time imagining leaving it. When I now look back, I find I had a completely wonderful time here."

In 1935, Raoul completed his B.A. in architecture with honors from the University of Michigan. He won a silver medal from the American Institute of Architects as the student with the highest scholastic standing. Years later, one of his professors described Wallenberg as one of the brightest students he had ever taught in thirty years.

However, Raoul's architectural degree wasn't well-recognized in Sweden. There was little need for architects during the Depression in this small country. He was forced to take a series of inconsequential positions and then started two businesses that failed. Over six years he had experienced only failure.

In a trip to Palestine in the late 30s, Raoul met refugees fleeing the Germans. They made him aware of what the Jews were going through in occupied Europe. Their stories affected him deeply. Perhaps it was because of his humane attitude toward life, or his Jewish blood. Whatever the reason, he was deeply stirred.

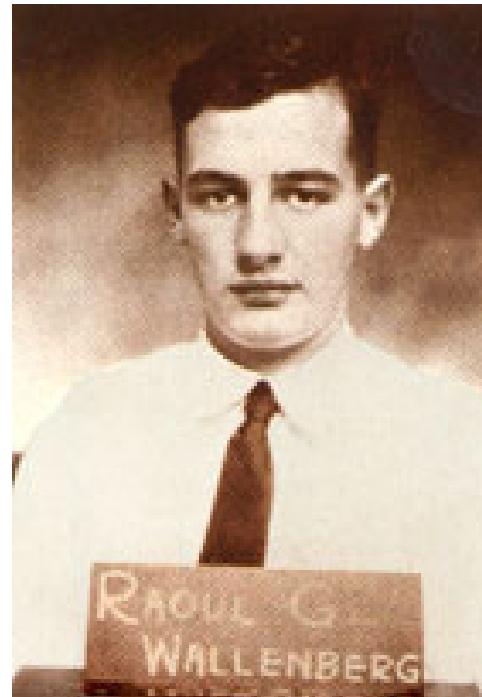
Then there was another chance to make a mark for himself. In 1941, an uncle set him up with a man who ran an importing-exporting firm between neutral Sweden and Central Europe. Raoul succeeded. He quickly became a partner in the firm.

Traveling to Germany and occupied France, he now saw first-hand the suffering being inflicted on the Jews. Because of his business dealings, he also learned how the German bureaucracy operated.

In 1942, Raoul, with his half-sister Nina Lagergren, saw a film in Stockholm about a modern day Scarlett Pimpernel figure trying to save inmates in concentration camps. Years later, she recalled him saying, "This is something I would like to do."

Raoul's ability to quickly master languages made him invaluable in traveling frequently to Budapest, Hungary, a major source of business for his company.

By 1944, Adolph Eichmann, a top Hitler henchman, had come to Hungary to carry out the Jewish extermination program. The American government was trying to stop him. President



© Antrim Caskey

Wallenberg, while an architecture student at U-M in the early 1930s; Maria Gunnoe, advocate for environmental and social justice and a coal industry critic is this year's Wallenberg Medal recipient and the speaker at the upcoming Wallenberg lecture Tuesday, October 23 at U-M's Rackham Auditorium.

Roosevelt sent a representative to find someone in neutral Sweden who could help save the Hungarian Jews.

Wallenberg met most of the requirements in terms of language ability, a wish to help save lives and an adventurous spirit. However, he had no diplomatic history; but with no better candidate in sight he eventually was offered, and eagerly accepted, the job. Raoul was attached to the Swedish Embassy in Budapest as an official diplomat on special assignment to aid Jews.

Only about 230,000 of a population that once numbered close to three-quarters of a million Jews were now left in Hungary after the rest had been exterminated or sent to concentration camps.

He was the ideal man for the job of saving Jews. Wallenberg epitomized a person who empathized with those in plight, even though they were not his fellow countrymen, even when they didn't share his religion or ethnicity. He didn't use traditional diplomacy, shocking the Swedish legation with his unconventional methods. Wallenberg was a gifted person, daring, shrewd and courageous. He instinctively understood the Nazi psyche. Like Oscar Schindler, who saved Jewish lives in his factory in Poland, Wallenberg bribed, manipulated, extorted and continuously confronted the Nazis.

After arriving in Budapest, Raoul became a whirlwind of action. In just six short months he:

Modified and illegally distributed a special Swedish passport, called the Schutzpass, which means

"protective pass" in German, to grant thousands of Jews immunity from deportation to the death camps.

Rented whole apartment buildings to be used as Swedish territorial, safe houses for those who had Schutzpasses so they could be removed from the dangerous Jewish ghetto.

Went to the local railroad station where Jews were being put into boxcars for trips to concentration camps, and in front of German soldiers, passed out Schutzpasses that freed them.

Confronted the Nazi commander of Budapest, telling him he would be hanged for crimes against humanity if he allowed a planned massacre of the Jews to go forward. This occurred when Budapest was about to fall to the Russians in January of 1945. The massacre was called off.

For reasons not fully known, the Nazis didn't arrest Wallenberg or even have him deported. Perhaps they wanted a conduit to help them get bribes or as a hedge against the approaching Allied forces. But in January 1945, the invading Russians arrested him. The reasons were never actually revealed. They might have thought he was a U.S. agent or working for the Germans.

In 1957, the Soviets admitted that Wallenberg had survived the war, but claimed he had died several years later. This wasn't widely believed. For thirty-five years his story remained mostly a secret, except in Sweden. Finally,

see RAOUL, page 11

Raoul Wallenberg, a hero with Michigan ties

continued from page 10

in 1980 Elenore Lester brought him to the world's attention in an article of his exploits in the *New York Times Magazine*.

The following year, President Reagan made Raoul Wallenberg an honorary citizen of the United States. Over the years other countries followed suit. Despite Russia's attempts to stifle the case, it took on a life of its own. Returning prisoners from the *gulag*, Russia's concentration camps in Siberia, said that they had heard of Wallenberg or had even met him. He was last seen at a prison camp 150 miles from Moscow in 1987. His fate is not known.

This year marks the 100th anniversary of Raoul Wallenberg's birth. He has been honored in many places around the world, most notably at Yad Vashem, Jerusalem's memorial to Holocaust victims – as the most outstanding of the "Righteous Gentiles."

Another special recognition is right here at the University of Michigan. Every year the Wallenberg Medal and Lecture is given to an individual whose achievements signal a person free of racial, religious or ethnic prejudices. Each person is selected because of his or her actions and/or writings that honor and perpetuate Wallenberg's own extraordinary accomplishments and human values.

Since 1990, courageous world figures like Aung San Suu Kyi and Elie Wiesel have received the medal. Others, who like Raoul Wallenberg were not well-known, have also been recognized with this award.

In 1985, the U.S. ambassador to the United Nations, Jean Kilpatrick, said Wallenberg "had become more than a man, more even than a hero. What Raoul Wallenberg represented in Budapest was nothing less than the conscience of the civilized world."

Raoul Wallenberg was a Michigan man.

Appalachian environmental activist Maria Gunnoe will receive the 2012 Wallenberg Medal and deliver her lecture on Tuesday, October 23, at 7:30 p.m. at Rackham Auditorium. The event is open to the public.

She is being honored as a fearless advocate for environmental and social justice. Maria works to educate and build citizen advocacy, and to rally communities that face strip mining destruction of their natural environment in her home of Boone County, West Virginia. She is a worthy successor to the earlier honorees.

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Few businessmen are capable of being in politics, they don't understand the democratic process, they have neither the tolerance or the depth it takes. Democracy isn't a business.

– Malcolm Forbes

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STREET BUZZ

More than a grocery store, PFC builds community



by Rissa Haynes
Groundcover Vendor

The Town Centers of New England in the early days of the American settlers come to mind when in Kerrytown near the People's Food Co-op. There is a sense of community where people meet, greet, shop and eat together. The People's Food Co-op is a community-owned store that provides access to really good locally-grown organic food and a source for fair trade items such as coffee, cocoa, and sugar. Additionally, the store provides great cheeses and other great dairy products from healthy cows along with natural, safe cosmetics. Deliciously healthy hot meals and cold salads are served by their Cafe Verde, which also features great-tasting baked goods, coffee, cocoa and tea.

August 2012 marks 41 years in operation for The People's Food Co-Op. What originated as a group in Ann Arbor wanting to pool their resources to get organic, locally-grown grocery items and beauty aids has blossomed into a community-owned \$6.5 million business. Its grocery store, and cafe of hot food/salad bar, are both now on 4th Avenue, between Ann and Catherine. An organization that began as a group of volunteers has grown into a paid and excellent kitchen staff, baristas, and friendly, efficient servers.

Although the Co-op members vote to elect a board of directors, the day-to-day operations are supervised and directed by the store's general manager. The Outreach Department is a unique portion of The People's Food Co-op. Its coordinator arranges various classes and community events that support health and healthy living. In April, they



The Co-op stocks a good selection of locally sourced baked goods and produce.

sponsored a talk by notable author and farmer Joel Salatin, which introduced The Washtenaw Food Hub to the community.

Patrons of the Co-op are frequent and faithful, consisting of both members and non-members. While members get to share the profits of the business and qualify for periodic discounts, non-members and visitors (students, Farmers Market patrons, out-of-town tourists, athletic event guests, gypsies, street musicians, etc.) enjoy the products, service, food and community atmosphere that is fostered at The People's Food Co-Op.

Some of the original Co-op members have their family heritage invested and take much pride in the progress of their original alliance. Well, they have great cause for pride in the progress of People's Food Co-op, as it has been a leader in the Midwest in co-operatives and has supported agricultural communities throughout the country and beyond.



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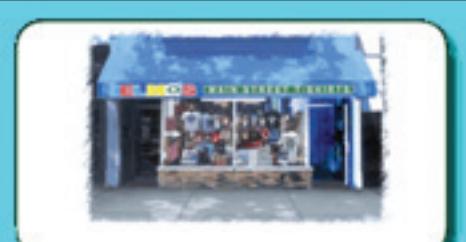
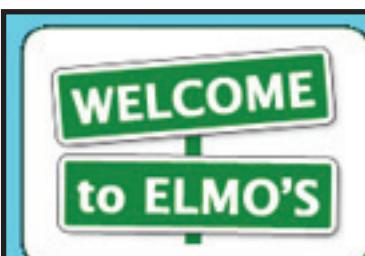
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